



Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2015

From the President

It is with great pleasure that I announce the launch of our electronic newsletter! Fifty years ago construction on the Dirksen Building was completed and the federal courthouse was moved from the 1898 Beaux-Arts style building designed by Henry Ives Cobb to the modern, steel and glass Mies van der Rohe structure where it sits today. Our first issue will focus on covering this controversial move and includes never-before-seen material from the Seventh Circuit Library's Archives. Inside you will also find information about the good work being done by our friends at the National Archives and Record Administration in Chicago.

Our court is rich with history and we hope this edition will pique your interest. Please keep an eye out for our upcoming Fall/Winter issue and our 2016 Calendar, which will contain even more rare, historical

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images of the Dirksen Building. Special thanks go to Gretchen Van Dam, our Vice President-Archivist, and Erin Schlicht for their hard work and dedication in putting together this newsletter. It would not have been possible without them.

The Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association is dedicated to recovering, preserving and promoting the history and artifacts of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and to educating the public on the role and function of the Court. The Association is composed of Judges, judicial clerks, attorneys, archivists and historians. If you are interested in learning more or would like to get involved with the Association, please contact me at jvick@seyfarth.com.

Enjoy!
Jordan Paige Vick

Dirksen Courthouse Marks 50 Years

In 1960, Congress authorized the U.S. General Services Administration to construct a new office complex in Chicago's Loop District, consolidating over thirty agencies formerly scattered throughout the city.

World-renowned architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe served as chief designer on the project and was assisted by three Chicago architectural firms. The new U.S. Courthouse was the first of the complex's three buildings to be completed, and its ten-

ants occupied the new space by 1965.

The Courthouse was renamed to honor long-time Illinois Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen after his death in 1969. Distinguished guests at the dedication ...

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Dirksen Courthouse cont.

ceremony in 1970 included United States Senators Charles H. Percy and Ralph T. Smith, and Congressman John C. Kluczynski.

Standing at 28 stories tall, the Dirksen Courthouse features a glass-enclosed great hall that spans the center of the courthouse, serving as a visual

gateway through the complex. The exterior of the building, characteristic of Mies's designs, is composed of flat black graphite-painted steel and bronze-tinted glass panes. The courthouse was designed with fifteen, two-story courtrooms located on the top ten stories of the building. Courtrooms were located away from the exterior walls to reduce audio and visual distractions. During the 1990s, additional courtrooms were created within the building in a style complimenting the original details. Such future expansion was incorporated into Mies's initial design.

In the early 1970s, the U.S. General Services Administration, under its Art in Architecture program,

commissioned a steel sculpture for the new federal plaza from the celebrated artist Alexander Calder. His creation, entitled Flamingo, was unveiled on October 25, 1974. The



53-foot-tall steel stabile, with its bright red color and graceful curves, provides a striking contrast to the dark, angular steel and glass curtain walls of the Federal Center buildings. In 1998, the stabile was conserved and lighting was added.

Northern District of Illinois

Historical Association

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Archivist

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www.ilndhistory.uscourts.gov

National Archives Exhibit Recognized

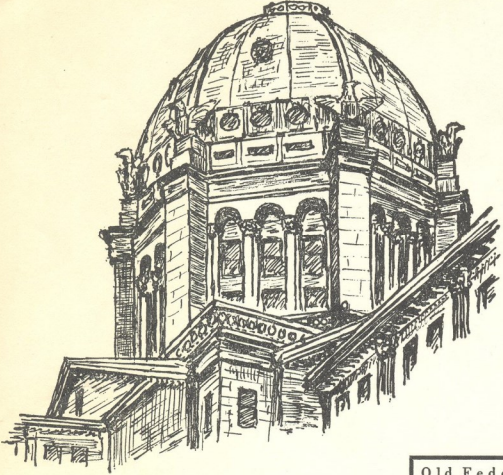


Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer, Chair of the Directors of the N.D. Illinois Court Historical Association, presented a special award to the National Archives at Chicago for the exhibit on immigration they created for the Dirksen Courthouse. The exhibit is located on the 25th floor of the courthouse, opposite the Parsons Memorial Courtroom where new citizens are sworn in. The exhibit highlights the many immigrants to the U.S. who have taken their naturalization oaths in Chicago federal courthouses, including the architect of the Dirksen Courthouse, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Martin Tuohy, Lead Archives Technician at NARA Great Lakes accepted the award on behalf of the agency.

From the Archives

Save Our Court House! Not everyone was happy to see the federal courts make the move to a new building in the 1960's. The Save Our Court-house Citizens' Committee was formed to lobby public officials to stop the demolition of the Henry Ives Cobb courthouse. President of the group was Dominic Abata, who was the head of the taxi drivers union.

In 1963, Mr. Abata became an international vice president of the AFL-CIO Seafarers International Union, and survived a 1966 apparent assassination attempt when a bomb was placed in his car. Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz refused a request by the Committee to halt demolition of the courthouse in 1965, noting "There are many of us who are with you."



Save Our Court House

CITIZEN'S COMMITTEE
 321 S. Plymouth Ct.
 Chicago 4, Ill.
 WE 9-8987
 If no answer call WA 2-5828

Old Federal Court House
 (Old Post Office)
 219 S. Clark, Chicago

MIRIAM ARNETT
 REV. RUTHANNE BASSLER
*Minister of Education,
 The People's Church*

NICHOLAS W. BIRKHOFF, JR.
MRS. WILLIAM F. CONLON
*Former Pres.,
 Alliance Francaise*

NINA D. HESS
*First Pres., Hyde Park League
 of Women Voters*

MRS. PETER J. JOYCE
*Community Service Chmn.,
 Council of Catholic Women*

GRACE C. KEEFE
*Chmn. of Institutions,
 Chgo. & Cook Co.
 Fed. of Women's Orgs.*

NOBLE W. LEE
*Dean
 The John Marshall Law School
 —Temporary Chmn.*

LAURENCE W. ROGERS
Architect

MR. & MRS. CHARLES G. STAPLES
 (names being added)
 Artwork: C. G. STAPLES

Dominic A. Abata
 Pres., TSAWSIU

Write us.
 Our rights
 need exercise,
 not last rites.

This building belongs to you, the people. It is no ordinary building. It was built to stand as a monument to symbolize the meaning and majesty of free government. NOW IT IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH! WHY?

No public hearings have been held in this Federal District, although the U.S. Department of the Interior Oct. 28, 1964 recommended a CAREFUL REVIEW of the need to demolish the Court House, termed the building STRUCTURALLY SOUND and CAPABLE OF MANY YEARS OF USEFUL SERVICE. A report by Historic American Buildings Survey, 1964 included in "buildings important enough to be saved for the future" our Federal Court House.

Destruction is a simple matter. Building something beautiful takes artistry, devotion, craftsmanship resulting from years of training, a sense of beauty and a grasp of truth. For "beauty is truth." It took eight years to complete our Court House.

Today your government is paying \$578,000 to have it leveled to the ground. The wrecker has exclusive possession of the building and its contents, even to the great American eagles guarding the dome, all to be peddled for his profit. What an insult to the memory of those who founded and fought to preserve our nation! No nation abandons the dreams of its founders without peril.

An aroused and indignant citizenry can still save this building. Public officials, local and national, need evidence of massive support. Write, wire, call them. Send us a copy. Or write us.

Contributions welcome. Send to: Save Our Court House Citizens Committee, 321 S. Plymouth Ct., Chicago 4, Illinois

News from NARA



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The National Archives at Chicago is located at 7358 S. Pulaski Road, near the Ford City Mall, and its research rooms are open to the public Monday-Friday. The regional archives has more than 140,000 cubic feet of historical records dating from 1800 to the 1990's, among them photographs, maps, and architectural drawings created or received by nearly 100 Federal agencies, including the U.S. Courts. The NARA/Chicago is one of 14 NARA facilities where the public has access to Federal archival records. NARA/Chicago offers research workshops on a variety of subjects, including genealogical research and Bankruptcy, Court, Genealogy, and Naturaliza-

tion records can be ordered online. Historic names in the records range from Aaron Burr and Abraham Lincoln to Al Capone and Abbie Hoffman. Historical themes documented range from the early nineteenth century opening of Midwestern public lands to the development of space exploration technology. NARA/Chicago's website is: <http://www.archives.gov/chicago/>.

NARA's current online exhibit is on the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 with digital scans of many records and documents about this great plague that killed more people than died in World War I. Check it out at: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/influenza->

The "Chicago Clock"

Many items from the Henry Ives Cobb courthouse were saved by Ninth Circuit Judge Richard H. Chambers. Upon hearing that most of the courthouse's fixtures and furniture was going to be thrown away prior to demolition, Judge Chambers sent three furniture vans to Chicago to acquire as much of the furniture as the vans could carry to San Francisco. One of the items saved was an 1890 clock that hung in the lobby of the courthouse.

The clock sat in the basement of the San Francisco courthouse for many years before it was restored and installed in the library of the federal courthouse in Pasadena, California --- a courthouse dedicated to and named for Judge Richard H. Chambers! Placing of the clock in the library involved coring a five foot diameter hole in the wall as the marble-faced clock weighs approximately 800 pounds. Library colleagues in the Ninth Circuit note that the clock keeps very accurate time and is known by all as the "Chicago Clock."

